

Chapter-2

Mapping the Range and Depth of the Clashes

Ananthamurthy's works essentially deal with intense cultural questions like caste, religion and modernity. He deals with all kind of conflicts in his works which are irresolvable. N. Manu Chakravarthy writes in this regard, "It was almost singularly Ananthamurthy, who fully embraced all kinds of contraries in his creative works and in his essays on literature, culture and society without, ever, dissolving or privileging any of them" (*The Hindu* 3). These contradictions in Ananthamurthy's novels are natural as he acquired different approaches of life through his experience in East and West. His upbringing and initial education in a traditional village make him aware of the cultural values of rural India where he finds many tribulations on humanistic level. At the same time, it is not easy for the people of India to accept the liberal, free and the individualistic ways of western countries. The conflicts between caste and social justice, East and West, tradition and modernity, myth and history, purity and pollution, religion and skepticism, sacred and secular occur in his novels but Ananthamurthy does not discard or embrace any of them.

Samskara and *Bharathipura* are his post independent novels which studies both metaphysical and social aspects of Hinduism. *Samskara* crystallizes not only the caste based spiritual aspect of Hinduism but its orthodoxy in rituals also. *Bharathipura* deals with the difficulty of change in a society which is bound in the chains of caste. It explores the fact that this change is not easy even to the educated class of India. India is a religion and caste ridden country where people follow the dehumanistic values of religion either through fear or through internalization which confine their thinking. The marginalization of subalterns is being extended through the notions of caste and religion. Both the lower caste and upper castes internalize the concepts of inferiority and superiority respectively

given to them by the hegemony of societal institutes. This internalization is not easy because society, parentage, culture, and religion make a complex web to normalize it. It has deep impact on the psyche of people, either in negative or in positive terms. Ananthamurthy also accepts the fact that, "I could neither become entirely anti-brahmanical as I am made out to be, nor could I save myself from becoming sceptic" (Author's note to *Bharathipura*). He gets aware of the dehumanizing forces of Indian caste system in which his own caste has the superior status among all the castes. His cultural and social system, which is bound to moralities and values, make him a critic of the false superiority of his own caste and community. His visit to the West on educational and political tours made him familiar to the openness of West so his writings are the representation of his own experiences as a Brahmin and as a skeptic. His own inconsistency is reflected in his novels. He discards any reductionalism so this is the reason that his works do not resolve any conflict.

The novels are in realistic manner and criticize the decadent values of Brahmanism and authoritative attitude of patriarchy and the submissive and irrational attitude of the subaltern. Casteism and religion are probably the two most important aspects of Indian social and cultural life which are interconnected. In India, there are many controversial issues, like the distribution of society among caste earlier based on profession and now based on birth. The difference between the Brahmins and the lower caste and male and female are the complications in Indian social life which shakes a sensitive mind to take reasonable steps. So many critiques of caste have been attempted that casteism has been attributed to Hinduism and orthodox people believes that casteism should maintain to protect Hinduism. It is very well identified on humanistic level that the main aim of the religion is to liberate the human beings from the difficulties of this life not to create discrimination to prolong the pains of lower caste people. The human beings

follow the rituals and prayers in different ways to achieve mental satisfaction in this world of chaos, to gain an entry into the paradise. But to follow the established pattern of rituals mislead people on humanistic ground. They follow mischievous path to maintain their religion or caste. The prohibition of food in Brahmins before the cremation, their absurd efforts to maintain the sanctity while eternally they have desires of all kinds. It is not wrong to have desires but wrong is to repress them in the name of God or religion and acquire them through mischievous ways. Ananthamurthy criticizes these mischievous paths in support of a life free of all the established notions or rituals in the name of God. In Hinduism the source of casteism and untouchability can be attributed to the misunderstanding of Dharma, rather than the understanding of it. Through his study of the ways of achieving Moksha, the novelist shows that orthodoxy have no place in Hinduism. These novels also show how the practice of orthodoxy can slow down the social and economic development of the community. Casteism and orthodoxy affect the people through difference that exist between lower caste people and Brahmins, Brahmin females and untouchable females. The clashes of caste in his novels show the unbalanced social structures of Indian society where the discrimination on the behalf of caste is growing day by day. The life of Brahmins is full of complications while the life of the untouchables is remarkably simple. The novel *Bharathipura* explains the worst position of lower caste people, the dominant ideology of Hinduism which is working on the minds of lower caste and upper caste people. The exploitation starts with the very idea of God. God is very important in Indian society; people try to follow the path of God prescribed in religious books. But here the God of lower caste people who has an appearance not only ugly but complete opposite to the gods of Brahmins. As Dalits are on the periphery and their god as well, "On top of the hillock beyond the temple was Bhootharaya with hair wet and unkempt and body smeared with bright red kumkuma; holding a singara and dancing in a

fine frenzy; and in the inner chamber of the temple was Manjunatha, wearing the crown” (*Bharathipura* 14). The god of lower caste is a slave of Manjunatha, so they internalize themselves to be slaves to upper castes. The inner chamber of the temple symbolizes Manjunatha’s centrality that directly reserves the centrality for the caste that worships Him. As Shripathi Rao said to Jaganatha watching the Shudras who are coming hurriedly towards the temple for lunch, “These are served in the courtyard of the temple- red unpolished rice and curry with lentils. The Brahmins have their meal inside-rasam, curry, vegetables, and a sweet, usually some *payasa*” (*Bharathipura* 24). In *Samskara*, Brahmins are at the center of the village but Dalits have their huts outside the Agrahara. This concept of centrality prolongs exploitation of the outsider (lower caste people). It is clear that the Brahmin is the lord and master of all he examines, whether the land or the living bodies that are created for his service. The brutality and the injustice of this system are not only the physical contact and talk, but the subaltern has to stand at the lords’ doorsteps for scraps of rotten food. The dehumanizing relation between the master (upper caste) and slave (lower caste) has exposed in the story “Poisoned Bread” by Bandhumadhav. In the story Grandpa Yetalya pleads to Bapu Patil, an upper caste landlord, “. . . . My lord is our bread-giver and we find it at a privilege to beg for our share of corn, master. I am your begging Mahar and feel proud to be so” (*Poisoned Bread* 167-168). In *Samskara* Belli while wrapping the clothes around her, says, “Why should rats and mice come to our poor huts? Nothing there to eat. Our huts aren’t like Brahmin houses”(40). Dalit huts are shown as ridden with poverty while the Brahmin houses are shown brimming with prosperity.

The structured daily routine of Praneshacharya is a part of Brahmanism but at the same time people belonging to the so called lower caste are presented as free from all the ritualized social practices. His *Samskara* starts with telling the daily routine of

Praneshacharya, “A routine that began with the bath at dawn, twilight prayers, cooking, medicines for his wife, and crossing the stream again the maruti temple for worship. That was the unflinching daily routine” (*Samskara* 1). Praneshacharya lives a bounded life which symbolizes that Brahmanism restricts individual freedom. It prevents Praneshacharya to do what Naranappa does. Brahmins live a fully ritualized life as Virender Pal observes that the Brahmins are afraid that they might lose their Brahminhood by cremating Naranappa who did not lead a life of an orthodox Brahmin. This complicated ritualistic affair is compared with the cremation rites of the lower caste people who just leave the bodies and “fired the huts” (Pal 97).

They are shown not only economically deprived but morally and spiritually also they are shown drained. There is no criticism of Chandri who belongs to lower caste and is living with Naranappa. Naranappa is seen as hostile in ritualized brahmanical ways. In *Bharathipura* and *Samskara*, Dalits are represented as immoral and free from all the restrictions. Shetty tells about Holeyarus to Jagannatha:

All in all, these people have no morals, saar,’ he said, ‘you know the saying, the distant hill is smooth. It’s true, saar. You must get close enough to them to know them. These illiterate sons of widows have no scruples at all, whatsoever. They keep their own daughters, their daughters-in-law. No sense of dharmic responsibility that she belongs to another man.
(*Bhaarthipura* 57)

Ananthamurthy is ambiguous while representing both the castes. He criticizes Brahmins and at the same time he does not take the side of lower caste people. He presents heroes who are aware of the hypocritical superiority of their own castes and irrationality of lower caste which exploit both the lower caste people and upper caste people. Ananthamurthy represents lower caste people sympathetically but a kind of

demystification is also mingled in his representation. As an educated person Jagannatha sees the bitter condition of the Holeyarus, but he has not overcome his caste prejudices. He is shown as inconsistent whether he is doing right or wrong, whether these people are worthless or have the same sensibilities as others have. His inconsistency shows that there is a difference in the economic condition of Jagannatha and Holeyarus and he did not understand the sensibilities of these people. These lower caste people confront him as shadows, meaningless, and enigmatic things which can't be solved. When he asks them to touch the saligrama, they do not touch it because of fear but he forces them, "Touch it! Touch it! Touch it!" he screamed" After touching he threw away the saligrama, "the holeyaru had appeared as meaningless things to him" (*Bharathipura* 160). Jagannatha feels irritated with the irresponsible attitude of Holeyaru towards his action plan that he plans for their upliftment. He experiences that these lower caste people have internalized the values of Hinduism and now they are afraid to break the system. Jagannatha, in his revolutionary zeal, neglects the fact that if it is difficult for him to decide, and what about the people who have been hegemonized for centuries. The decision to the question act or not to act is not easy. They have internalized the social structure which marginalized them to the extent of nothing and meaningless things to the educated people of upper caste. This internalization is not easy going rather it is a result of hegemony of established structures through centuries. Society, religion, and caste politicize this repression for the comfort of the dominant to prolong their dominance.

Ananthamurthy tries to expose the politics behind the Hindu religious theories, which are the part of this marginalization, through the concept of caste system. In Indian continent, realities about God, religion, caste and birth are made for the sake of dominant and these 'made realities' preserve the hierarchical social structure. This is a politics to maintain the difference between the dominant and the repressed on the name of right

path. Naranappa breaks the taboo about sacred fish that if any man caught them he would cough up blood and die. Praneshacharya thinks:

With this kind of rebellious example, how will fair play and righteousness prevail? Won't the lower castes get out of hand? In this decadent age, common man follow the right paths through fear- if they were destroyed, were could we find the strength to uphold the world? (*Samskara* 22)

This religious hegemony is depicted in *Bharathipura* also. Jagannatha, an educated person, realizes the hegemony of Brahmanism which is created to control the lower caste people or to dominate them; “just look at this! We are making the Bootharya of the Shudras work for us just to keep them under our control. See how cleaver we are Rayare!” (*Bharathipura* 23). In both the novels, Ananthamurthy tries to demystify the mythical structure. Jagannatha, with his revolutionary attitude tries to improve the condition of lower caste people by destroying the mythic beliefs of society which keeps them to periphery. Jagannatha tries to destroy the hegemony of religion in the minds of the Holeyarus set by the upper castes on the name of right path. In starting, they are shown as having no much concern about religion but as the chariot festival comes near they are shown more fearful. The religious hegemonic structures work smoothly on their mind. As his *Bharathipura* stands for the whole country, he suggests that fear works more than devotion on Indian psyche. This fear of religion, sanctity of God, and the very idea related to damned, prohibit people to live a free life and question their devotion.

There is a connection between religion and market which exposes the conflict between the theories of religion and the modern theories of profit. In present scenario religious places are not for the devotion or spirituality but they are the marketized hubs. People like Prabhu shown to be religious but their theories of profit are based on secularism. They make advantage of the fear of religion for their business. Prabhu has a

hold on every business in *Bharathipura*, Manjunatha rice milk, Manjunatha lorry service, Manjunatha soda factory, “this was Parbhu’s policy: you can lose honour and self respect to make money; honour and respect will come with the wealth you’ve made, anyway” (*Bharathipura* 86). People are using religion and devotion as business because of the fear. Jagannatha argues with Shripathi Rao, “Ours is still a medieval economy. And Manjunatha is at its centre. It is natural for you to fear your business will turn topsy-turvy if there is any threat to his fame. But then, look at this way; because of Manjunatha, our lifestyle has stagnated. We’re rotting.” (*Bharathipura* 89). Ananthamurthy is crystallizing the psyche of people where belief and disbelief, sacred and foul and religion and materialism coexist. Some people like Jagannatha, Naranappa and Mahabla try to break the hegemony of religion, caste and God to differentiate between real and superficial but either they have to struggle with the society or they have to face the dilemma of their mythical past in which they lived or grown. India has a strong mythical past to preserve its established notions of spirituality, sanctity, religion and the hierarchal structure among castes and gender. These ‘made realities’ work as ‘collective unconscious’ of the people which always effects the actions of individuals. These ‘made realities’ work through proper institutes like family, school, religious place, hospital. Michel Foucault calls them as ‘discourse’:

Conditioned and constructed, a terrain of thought, a system of knowledge, a particular kind of language that allowed some things to be said and disallowed some others. Thus the priest used the discourse of religion, of sin and salvation in order to preach particular norms of behavior in domains like marriage, sexuality, family and charity. . . . (*Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* 35)

He shows how these discourses condition people's lives and built their thinking. As in *Bharathipura* people believe that Bhootharya is an agent of Manjunatha, or He will stretch them (Holeyarus) out with legs if they enter in Manjunatha's temple or they will split blood and die if they try to defile the God of upper caste. In the novel *Samskara* Brahmins believe that if they will cremate Narnappa's corpse they will be polluted. Their actions are very opposite to what they want. They wanted to criminate Naranappa for the gold but they can't. Jagannatha and Praneshachary both understand the hypocrisy of these beliefs and choose to live differently but are caught between them. One can say that India has so many clashes which make it absurd and it is impossible to resolve these clashes. Even a person like Jagannaha who has acquired some sense of modernity fails to change these 'made realities' but his action plan is symbolic of transition period and accountable. When Jgannatha tries to prove that lower caste people's entry will not draw any destruction, instead it will take these two different castes together but in this procession he creates new myth that Holeyarus are polluted and should never try to defile Manjunatha because God himself do not want their presence as he disappears before their entry. Bharathipura is formed for the power of local deity Manjunnatha. It is a depiction of Hinduism's structures which create hierarchical structures of caste, myths, duties, concept of morality and their grip over individual. In his essay "Five Decades of my Writing" Ananthamurthy writes, "The world I grew up assumed that the caste system and the hierarchies associated with it were rock-like and permanent and God-made" (Pal 17). These myths are broken by the writer through the character of Praneshacharya and Jagannatha try to demystify these myths. The practice of untouchability is not of divine origins as some people have called it to be. Praneshacharya himself believes in the concept of pollution as in the beginning of the novel he does not want to talk to Chandri because "he would be polluted" (*Samskara* 2). Towards the end of the novel

Praneshacharya does not want to sit and eat in the temple because he is in pollution period. There is a popular belief that if any person in pollution will eat in the temple then the temple chariot will not move. Praneshacharya eats in the temple but the temple chariot does not stop. So the pollution caused by his wife's death proves to be a myth. Similarly the concept of pollution caused by the touch of human beings and the entire system of untouchability is a myth which needs to be demolished. In Bhootharya is considered as an agent of Manjunnatha. So to upset the power of Manjunnatha is to bring retribution from Bhootharya. The hierarchal structure between Manjunnatha and Bhootharya directly operates the hierarchal structure between the Bharamins and Holeyarus. It exposes that the myths are related to God or religion are to prolong the dominance of Manjunnatha or the upper castes. He knows that everything happening in Bharathipura is because of the Manjunnatha and His powers. Every action in the novel is centered around Manjunnatha. The president of India also goes to the temple of Manjunnatha when he visits the village Bharathipura. With this realization Jagannatha's skepticism grows strong. He resigns to his position of the priest in Manjunatha temple. Jagannatha, by defiling the Saligarma wants to pollute the very notion of sanctity of Manjunatha temple. So the clashes between pollution and purity are related to caste and maintained by the society through different ideologies. The concepts of purity and sanctity are also related to Brahmanism but Ananthamurthy exposes that the concept of superiority and purity pressurize Brahmins to live a hypocritical life and the concept of impurity and untouchability frees Shudras to live amoral lives. But in actuality to preserve the difference between the purity and pollution both the castes are living unauthentically. The free livings of lower caste people are authentic because they have not the burden of being scant, moral, and pure in any situation. In the novels these Brahmins are shown as acquiring mischievous paths to maintain the value system of their religion. Praneshacharya himself chooses to be an

ascetic to become superior 'Acharya' in the eyes of other people. He follows a routine life, marries to a sexually invalid wife to maintain his asceticism. Sushila Punitha questions the imposed asceticism of Praneshacharya:

Wouldn't he have matured better if he had chosen to be celibate? While Naranappa putrefies openly, Praneshacherya does so secerately with his self-imposed impotency. He impresses the other Brahmins of the Agarahara with an outward show of regard for the Niyamas yet he lacks the inner humility that goes beyond egoism to practice what he preaches. No wonder then that he could not find the right advice from the scriptures on Naranappa's *samaskara*. (*Samskara* 135)

The human greed to a moralistic or idealistic position and the endeavours to maintain it causes the death of individuality. Ananthamurthy, giving the example of Praneshacharya, questions the rigidity of Brahmanism which dehumanizes the Brahmins and at the same time makes them superior. This discourse of superiority has been questioned by the writer which forces Brahmins to live hypocritically. Ananthamurthy tries to resolve the clashes between the orthodoxy and free livings. If the orthodox ways restrict individuality, the modernistic open ways are also futile in country like India where people have great regard for the religious values. Naranappa rejects Brahmanism and acquire extreme modernistic ways of life because of his understanding of the decadent ways of Brahmanism. He says to Praneshacharya:

Let's see who wins in the end- you or me. I will destroy Brahmanism, I certainly will. My only sorrow is that there's no Brahmanism really left to destroy in this place- except you. Guruda, Lakshman, Durgabhata-ahaha- what a Brahmins! If i were still a Brahmin, that fellow Gurudacharya washed me down with his *aposhana* water. Or that Lakshmana- he loves

money so much he'll lick a copper round my neck, just to get at my property. (*Samskara* 23-24)

He knows the hypocrisy of these Brahmins. He is aware of the fact that Praneshacharya has imposed Brahmanism on himself. Other Brahmins are deceivers in their guise of Brahmin self's. Lakshmana, Dashacharya, Gurudacharya, have lust for sex, craving for money and mean desires for food. They have all the desires which Naranappa has, but in repressive form. Their desires come out to the reality with the progression of the novel. In this regard A.K.Ramanujan writes in his afterword to the novel *Samskara*:

Protected by fully modern secular laws, and even more fully by the Brahmins' own bad conscience, he lived defiantly in their midst. If they could exorcise him, they would have found in him a fitting scapegoat to carry their own inmost unspoken libidinous desires. He was their mocking anti-self and he knew it. (*Samskara* 139-140)

Naranappa has the realization that his hedonistic ways are also futile. He tells a story which has a moral, "Every action results not in what is expected but in its exact opposite" (*Samskara* 24) Jagannatha, like Naranappa, believes that the efforts to change are futile in country like India. His action Plan to take the lower caste people into the temple becomes a political step. And when he tries to demystify the myths related to caste and God he creates another myth unintentionally. Ananthamurthy is not against tradition but his works show how traditional values of Brahmanism are irrelevant in resolving the problem of contemporary world. Praneshacharya tries to resolve the problem of Naranappa's cremation through the prescribed ways into Vedas, but fails. And at the same time he is not against the modernity. He is a modernizer who wants modernity for the sake of humanity and wants to abolish the values of the decadent Brahmanism and its

dehumanizing notions which pressurize people to live hypocritically. Their interior natures are rotten by their repressive desires. Repression arouses more intensity for these worldly desires. The question arises if they are not authentic to the self how they can be faithful to their nation, religion, Caste and family. *Bharathipura* is shown in the grasp of religion, caste, unequal distribution of wealth and politics. Their life becomes pointless if they do not resolve the dilemma of the right or wrong. He says to Shripathi Rao:

Don't you feel that this town has been rotting for centuries, rayare? I can't really convince you in an argument how manjunatha's responsible for this; only action can prove it. Life in such a society seems pointless because there's no scope for any action here except eating, mating, dying.”
(*Bharathipura* 63)

Both Jaganatha and Naranappa believe in modernistic ways of life but both have acquired these differently. Jagannatha has acquired them from his living experiences in India and England but Naranappa acquires these modernistic values through his own sensibility, through his own understanding of decadent ways of Brahmanism. Both have the agendas against the established values of low and high. Through these characters Ananthamurthy represents his own angst against his own community which, according to him, is ruining with the burden of traditional rigid values. The term ambivalence works as a positive metaphor in Ananthmurthy's works. It is a result of the stress on the mind of an individual who tries to find out a way between these conflicts but fails. He is ambivalent when dealing with different conflicts, on one hand his characters refute the alleged religious sanction of casteism and orthodoxy and on the other hand they end in the boundary of religion. Both Naranappa and Praneshacharya seek different ways to achieve a holistic life. One acquires the extreme traditionalistic ways whereas other acquires extreme modernistic ways but in the end both realize the incompleteness of their

preferred ways. Naranappa favors modernism, rejects brahminhood and brings home Chandri, a prostitute, from Kundapura, a nearby town. He drinks alcohol and invites muslims to eat meat. He throws Saligrama, the holy stone which is believed to represent God Vishnu, into the river, and spits after it. His skeptic world is very opposite to the sacred world of Praneshacharya. In his skeptic world he cares only for individual desires while discarding everything. The flowers in the backyards of the other brahmins are meant for worship and their women wear only withered flowers gathered from the altar. But Naranappa grows the night-queen plant in his front garden. Its intense smelling flowers are meant only to decorate Chandri's hair. Naranappa, with his Muslim friends catches sacred fish from the temple tank, cooks and eats them. He accepts, "I belong to the "Hedonist school" which says- borrow, if you must, but drink your ghee" (*Samskara* 21). But drinking alcohol, eating meat is not modernity. It is apparent that the ways which Ananthamurthy represents as counterfoils to the traditional brahmanical ways are amoral in Indian traditional context. But in the end he dies with the sacred words on his lips. He tries to overcome his brahminhood but fails. He is very opposite to Praneshacharya who does everything as prescribed in Vedic texts. But in the end the transformation of Praneshacharya assures that an individual is not only a puppet in the hands of society. But Naranappa's dying with holy words on his lips suggests an individual can fight to become what he/she wants but his/her cultural past never allow him/her to go alone. He/she can overcome to the dilemma of cultural crisis but to some extent. Through their characters Ananthamurthy represents hollowness of the reduction in any sense whether in asceticism or in skepticism, past or present and tradition or modernity. Naranappa wins in the end because of his utterance proves right with the transformation of Praneshacharya and Jagannatha fails in his 'action plan' because neither he understands the sensibility of lower caste people, nor of Indian society. However apparently he succeeds in his plan to

get the Holeyaru in the temple. Through his transition Ananthamurthy suggests the need for changing or rejection of orthodox values of Brahmanism so that a Brahmin can live authentically in this contemporary modern period. For the centuries lower caste people have been doing all the loathsome work for the upper castes. But in this novel there is a solution to the Indian caste system as Ambedkar professed in his lectures and books that only inter-caste marriage can demolish Indian caste system. Jagannatha thinks:

If the awareness is born that even a mystic's shit would stink if there was no Holeyaru, then the time would move on. And, with the change, the production of iron will increase. . . . And with that, there will be flush toilets all over the country. . . . Gandhiji's and Basvanna's dream will blossom. Instead of human waste, these dark holathiyaru will wear white jasmine flowers in their hair and, besmeared with sandalwood paste, they'll be attractive to Brahmin man. And Brahmin girls will fall for dark, broad-shouldered men like Pilla. (*Bharathipura* 226)

This is a very contradictory condition of India and many revolutionary people tried to break the difference of caste. The economical condition of lower caste people and the long history of their exploitation compelled them to do something and reservation is the result of their endeavors. The dilemma is that in every field, caste is still remaining in different forms. Regarding present situation of caste system and its resolution Jagannatha thinks:

As long as the concept of my mother, my son, my wife remain in their present connotations, so long will notions of caste and wealth remain, or as long as the idea of caste and status exists, so long will the present attitude to relationships also stay. Trying to vary nature of these concepts is

revolution. Henceforth, I stand committed to conscious struggle- ready to see everything, prepared to go through anything. (*Bharathipura* 234)

This equality can be achieved by disbelieving the metaphysical connotations of the discourses of religion and caste that make the subaltern inferior and secure a high position for Brahmins and patriarchy. We might call it Hindu colonialism, a systematic imperialism of religion. The hegemony of religion and caste also contributes the authority of patriarchy. The assumptions about the superiority of male gender or the inferiority of female gender both at physical or mental level are not new to the society. The discrimination of caste is closely related to the clashes of gender. These novels are situated in a period where women had not much freedom like the men; they were restricted to the household duties. They are considered more devoted to the family, religion and society but Jagannatha questions their condition in the institutes of family and society. He observes that they are fetuses in the womb of God:

Women take daily offerings of bananas and coconut in well –scrubbed shining plates to Manjunatha, who wears a gold crown because of a blind belief that he saved my life. Are they the real beneficiaries of this permanence? Or are they mere foetuses in the womb of Manjunatha? (*Bharathipura* 94)

The female characters are doubly marginalized; firstly they are caught in the nexus of religion or God and secondly in the web of the patriarchy. In both the novels Ananthamurthy represents upper caste women in comparison to the lower caste women. Brahmin women are not only carrying the burden of traditional brahmanical values but the extra burden imposed by the patriarchy. There is no doubt that the Brahmin women in *Samskara* are described in a very negative light. In the Agrahara of Durvasapura, we do not find even a single Brahmin woman who is described in positive words. Portrayal

of Brahmin males is somewhat positive as there are no untouchable male characters in the novel to compare with, but the portrayal of Brahmin females is most damaging. The novelist draws a sharp contrast between the frigid, dried up women of the orthodox Brahmin community and the sensuous women of the lower Castes. As Ramanujan points out in his Afterword:

While all the brahmin wives are sexless, unappetizing, smelly, invalids at best, the women of other castes are seen as glowing sex-objects and temptations to the brahmin. Lowcaste and outcaste women like Chandri and Belli are hallowed and romanticized by references to classical heroines like Shakuntala, and Menaka, the temptress of sages. (*Samskara* 144)

Brahmin women are represented as: “asexual, cheek sunken, breast withered, mouth stinking of lentil soup” (*Samskara* 37). And on the other side outcaste women are shown as sexual, full of life living forces. With their physical beauty they are mentally strong also. There is a binary opposition between ‘sexual and ‘asexual’ women. They are represented as they have only these two characteristics either sexual or asexual and their need is based on these two. As Nalini Natrajan elucidates the response of patriarchy towards asexual wives, “Their lack of sexual attractiveness is offered as an excuse for both Naranappa and Shripathi’s (the younger Brahmin students) abandonment of their respective wives” (Nalini 161). She observes that the positive sexuality is denied to Brahmin women. The ritually lower groups are the widows who do not cut their hair and do not obey diet restrictions. They are objects of charm for the Brahmins of Agrahara. But the widows of upper sub-caste of Brahmins are shown in pathetic condition with their shaved head and restricted diet. Nalini says about the relation of ritual and women:

The particular connection of upper caste women to ritual complicates the nature of her marginalization an erasure. In sense, she is the embodiment

of ritual, which means that the stranglehold of ritual on the modern individual is gendered and associated with certain gynophobia. This gynophobia is distinct from the gynophobia which may be read in traditional (Shastric) text or in the colonial gynophobia of Ramakrishna. It ought to be read rather, as part of the history of the interaction between caste and the forces of modernity. Consequently the representation of lower a caste woman is also implicated in a similar nexus of ritual and the libidinal; however here the women is excluded from ritual and is an embodiment of libidinality. (Nalini 162)

Ananthamurthy is criticized because of the reductive way of representation of the women of both castes. The lower caste women are praised only on physical grounds. They are represented as sexual or asexual, if there are only two categories to judge a woman. “Belli was carrying a pitcher of water on her head, the rag on her body has slipped, and as she stood in the moon light bouncing her breasts, the color of earth- she'd look like Shakuntala herself. (*Samskara* 39). The whole Sanskrit literature glorified by the writer is explicitly anti- woman and anti-subaltern. In Brahmanic epics the male fantasies sexualize the body of the woman as an object of desire, to be ordered, violated and accommodated by the patriarchy. The representation of Belli and Chandri in *Samskara* and Kaveri in *Bharathipura*, with their eroticized bodies is partial and inhuman in its approach. In *Bharathipura*, all the female characters as Chikki, Kaveri, Bhagyamma, and Amma are less revolutionary and clever than the men of Bharathipura. However Chikki, Bhagyamma, and Amma are more idealistic than Kaveri a lower caste women, “A buxom wench, she had tucked her sari high enough to display her sharply thighs, and tied her hair into a bun and stuck a rose in it. She bent forward provocatively to sweep under the bed” (*Bharathipura* 58). It clears that the writer believes that the lower caste people are amoral

and having no restrictions on sexual issues. Women like Kaveri are represented as seductress and greedy for money.

The representation of Brahmin women is also not real as if lower caste women are full of sexuality, Brahmin women are completely devoid of it. So in gender representation Ananathamurthy creates binaries on the basis of caste and beauty. Characters like Chandri, Billi, Padmawati have some dialogues in the novel but any Brahmin woman is not given such importance. Virender Pal criticizes Ananthmurthy's representation of Brahmin women. He writes:

The portrayal of Brahmin women as asexual objects seems unjust when we have a look at the Brahmin ladies like Hema Malini, Sonali Bendre, Vidya Balan and Moushmi Chatterji and others who are considered among the most beautiful females. But here the novelist lets his own thoughts, own biases seep in the text. (Pal 98)

There is no sympathy for the woman as victim in the novels, but the references of Vedic texts are used to make the representation usual and natural. When Naranappa's and Shripati's Brahmanhood is suspended, Kalidasa's "poetic justice" is cited to justify their intimacy to the lower caste women through the sacred commentary of the Acharya (Samskara 25). The text legitimizes the project of the upper caste patriarchal violation of the subaltern woman. It legitimizes the injustices done by Brahmin to the lower caste people and the subaltern communities, and tries to make it natural. In both the novels, the lower caste people are shown living with harmoniously and easily compromising to Brahman hegemonic structures that there is no tension among the communities even on the question of land and property issues. It is an instance of internalization of the imposed social hegemonic structures, given by the Vedic texts like *Manusmiriti*. It seems that Manu speaks through the novelist AnanthaMurthy.

In *Bharathipura* Brahmin women have some dialogues but the lower caste women like Thimmi, Kaveri are represented by the omnipresent narrator. So these women are represented as silent in comparison to men and upper caste women. Ananthamurthy represents women's subordinate position at time just after India's independence. One side women characters are shown as docile, vulnerable or the other side they are shown as deviant. Naranappa discards his wife earlier and lives according to his will and Praneshacharya feels the ugliness of his wife after experiencing the beauty of Chandri and after some time she dies. Both the wives are invalid to physical satisfaction, one by fate and another by her willingness and both are discarded by their husbands. However Praneshacharya keeps his wife till her death. But till then he is shown as incomplete or unable to resolve the problem of Naranappa's cremation. It is only after Bhagirathi's death he understands the complete process of 'Dharma' and its relation with Kama, Aratha, and Moksha. Only after that he decides to remove the body and to expose the truth about the incident in forest Chandri. These female characters are shown as only the stairs to climb the hill of wishes of the patriarchy. As Bupsi Sidhwa, in his novel *Fire*, shows how Ashok influenced by swami considers desire as the root cause of doom and tries to overcome his physical desire, he uses his wife Radha to test himself, neglecting her physical desires. In novel *Samskara* four female characters, Bhagirathi, Chandri, Billi and Padmavati are not highlighted as the male characters but they all play crucial roles in the transition of male characters. As Praneshacharya marries an invalid Bhagirathi only to keep his asceticism which he considered the only way of Dharma. So in a way Bhagirathi plays not only an important part in his determination of being an ascetic but she, and her invalidity are the forces which keep Praneshacharya's asceticism alive. Secondly, Chandri becomes the path finder for Praneshacharya. Her sudden entry in forest is like the invocation of muse or muses in epics for hero's convenience. Only through Chandri,

Praneshacharya realizes the meaninglessness of the life without physical pleasures which he has been living with his invalid wife. And third Naranappa's wife becomes an obstacle in Naranappa's free livings and he discards her completely and uses free livings of an outcaste to his own deviant hedonistic ways. His wife dies but he does not attend her funeral. His wife's objection for his living with Chandri and for his anti-brahmanical ways is never mention in the novel. These female characters are shown as repressed by patriarchy or its hegemonic ideological structures. These female characters are shown as subjects to the hegemonic structures of caste, class, and gender. This hegemonic structure of caste works on Chandri's mind who decides to conceive the baby from Praneshacharya, 'crest jewel of vadic learning'. Chandri contemplates, "Her mother used to say: prostitutes should get pregnant by such a holy man. Such a man was the acharya, he had such looks, virtues; he glowed. But one had to be lucky to be blessed by such people" (*Samskara* 46). Chandri herself has no ideology. If she knew the fact that the life which she has lived with Naranappa was right then why she chooses Praneshacharya to improve her status. It is right that her action is only for herself but mistakenly does for Praneshacharya and it is according to social ideological structures. Bupsi Sidhwa in *Water* crystallizes the Brahman ideology that if they have physical relation with lower class woman, it is not for their physical pleasure. But it will help these wretched lower class women who should be grateful that Brahmins have touched them. The purity of Brahmins and their pure touch will help them to be pure in next birth. Even among the people of lower caste this ideology prevails. As lower caste women work under the ideological structures of society the Brahmin are also compelled to it. The problem crystallizes in the description of the Brahman ideology according to which a Brahmin can make sex with the low caste woman, but can't to talk to her, "Belli was alright for sleeping with; she was

no good for talk. If she opens her mouth, she talks only ghosts and demons" (*Samskara* 41). In this context in *Bharathipura* the narrator tells:

After all, it was impossible to have anything more than a few moments of sleeping with her. Beyond using her as an object to satiate his lust, he could not expect any other kind of bonding to arise out of such an intimacy; no personal involvement of any sort. He was amazed to see how much desire her body could arouse in him and how unreachable it was, only because of a class difference. (58)

Only bodies are given special references and the emotions are neglected in the representation of lower class women. Brahmanism views these other bodies are not of human beings, but of mere animals. The imagery and symbols in the novels are gender oriented and prolongs this concept of superiority and inferiority. The clashes of gender are represented with the symbols. As according to the archetypal approach, the serpent connotes feminine sensuousness and the tiger is associated with masculine lust. Naranappa confronts Chandri's body as "a raging striped tiger" (*Samskara* 45). Praneshacharya, reflecting on his encounter, with Chandri in the forest, recognizes "his body's tigerish lust", which was under compassion. (*Samskara* 82). Also by implication the tiger gets associated with the world of violent pursuit and crude pleasure that fall outside the brahminic existence. At the fair, the Praneshacharya is horrified by the 'tigerish world of cock-fights' which threatens his new found values as well as his orthodoxy. In *Bharathipura*, Bhagyamma explains her subordinate position in the house before Jagannatha, where Shripathi Rao finds her an obstacle in his idealistic life, "If I try talking to him, he springs on me like a tiger" (*Bharathipura* 20). Thus the serpent and tiger image project the masculinity of patriarchy with its strong hold on subalterns through hegemony or fear.

In *Bharathipura*, Ananthamurthy represents a contrast between Indian woman who is docile, silent, idealized and in Western woman who is open minded, independent and indifferent. Margret is earning and she lives her life according to her desires. She has the guts to oppose or to say the truth. One side there is Chikki who opposes with silence but Margret criticizes openly, “Jagan somehow I feel chander’s spite is more real than your nobility. . . . But you’re not enough of a man” (*Bharathipura* 41). And in last she rejects Jagannatha in favour of Chander. In *Bharathipura* women spent their most of the time in smoky kitchens and the symbol of silence is more important for the suffering and angst of women in *Bharathipura*. Jagannatha irritates with the silent resistance of Chikki. He thinks that she is using her silence as a weapon against his ‘action plan’, “silence was her weapon. He was angry with her. He felt her silence was the essence of the sterility of their lives” (*Bharathipura* 145). Nagamani remains silent till her death. Nagamani is living with her father-in-law to do the household duties. She is stagnant, dumb and vulnerable to the established structure of society which bounds them to the household duties only. Under the pressure of the patriarchy, she finds her life as meaningless and herself as submissive and chooses death. Her suicide in shows the worst condition of women at that time where women are have burden of familial and social responsibility. They have to repress their desires to fulfill their responsibilities. Patriarchy uses them in the name of responsibility. Some have shown as dissatisfied with their roles which she has to perform to satisfy the family, patriarchy, and society who either choose to be revolutionary or get freedom in suicide. Naganani to suicides because she does not find any scope to live according to her will. Another category of women is that who have internalized the roles given by patriarchy act accordingly. They are not revolutionary but want a static society. Chikki , Bhagyamma are dissatisfied with the open and revolutionary thinking of Jgannatha, and Shripathi Rao. They are less revolutionary in comparison to the male as

they have internalized all the values of society. The educated male patriarchy finds her angst, depression, and resistance as useless.

Without realizing it, Chakki was hurting him, with the way she looked at him while giving him coffee, with her unkempt hair, with her face looking drawn with fasting, and more than all, with the silent suffering with which she searched his eyes during lunchtime in the empty dining room.

(Bharathipura 146)

Therefore, we can say that the novels are not just silent about the subaltern existence and the struggle of the subaltern to survive, but try to erase and mute the cries and curses that come from the underneath the pressure of these colonized ideological forces. These are the dual response of the writer to the casteism and gender as he feels it is possible but not easy to overcome these established structures of society. Ananthamurthy, through his writings represents his dilemmas of being a Brahmin, a male and a human being that is why there is an ambivalent response to the existence of subaltern. Ananthamurthy criticizes both the Brahmins and Dalits for their restricted life and rough ways of life. This is the cause of his criticism that makes him a target to comment by the feminists, traditionalists and Dalits.

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